

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. A method for generating or extending a user interest profile, comprising:  
monitoring ~~electronic~~ e-mail messages directed to the user;  
selecting those ~~electronic~~ e-mail messages satisfying at least one predetermined condition indicating that they are likely to include information relevant to the user's interests; and  
extracting profile data from the selected messages;  
wherein, for each selected message, the selected message is selected and the extracted profile data is extracted before the user reads the selected message.
2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising storing the extracted profile data.
3. A method according to claim 2, further comprising displaying the extracted profile data to the user and storing only those data indicated by the user.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one predetermined condition is constituted by the message having an attachment.
5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one predetermined condition is constituted by the message being a forwarded message.
6. A method according to claim 5, wherein said extracting further comprises operating on words added by a forwarder of the forwarded message.
7. A method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one predetermined condition is constituted by the message including a URL.
8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the profile data comprise one or more keywords or phrases.

9. A method according to claim 1, wherein said extracting further comprises operating on data contained within a subject line of the message.

10. A method according to claim 1, wherein said extracting further comprises operating on an attachment to the message.

11. A method according to claim 1, further comprising using the extracted data to search an information repository for matching items.

12. An apparatus for generating or extending a user interest profile, the method comprising:

means for monitoring ~~electronic~~ e-mail messages directed to the user;

means for selecting those ~~electronic~~ e-mail messages satisfying at least one predetermined condition indicating that they are likely to include information relevant to the user's interests; and

means for extracting profile data from the selected messages;

wherein, for each selected message, the means for selecting selects the selected message and the means for extracting extracts the extracted profile data before the user reads the selected message.

13. An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the at least one predetermined condition is constituted by the message having an attachment.

14. An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the at least one predetermined condition is constituted by the message being a forwarded message.

15. An apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said extracting means operates on words added by a forwarder of the forwarded message.

16. An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the at least one predetermined condition is constituted by the message including a URL.

17. An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the profile data comprise one or more keywords or phrases.

18. An apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said extracting means operates on one of data contained within a subject line of the message and an attachment to the message.

19. An apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising:  
a display for displaying the extracted profile data to the user; and  
a memory for storing only those data indicated by the user.

20. An apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising means for using the extracted data to search an information repository for matching items.